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SUBJECT: ITALIAN MFA U/S MANTICA VISITS SOMALIA

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor David D. Pearce, reasons 1.
4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary. The Italian MFA's Undersecretary for Africa Alfredo Mantica met with Somali TFG PM Ali Gedi in Jowhar January 5, as Somali President Yusuf and Speaker of Parliament Hassan were signing the Aden Declaration in Yemen. According to the MFA, Gedi expressed support for the Declaration in his meeting with Mantica. During the visit, Mantica formally notified the TFG that Italy's current Special Envoy for Somalia, Amb. Francesco Lanata, would be the GOI's official representative to the TFG. The MFA reported that Italy would press other EU countries at the January 11 COAF in Brussels to follow the Belgian and the GOI lead in naming envoys. End Summary.

2. (C) MFA Office Director for Somalia Giancarlo Izzo told Poloff January 9 that the GOI had not expected an agreement to be signed at Aden, and called the outcome important, although he noted the true test would be whether or not the parliament actually meets. The agreement did not specify a location for the meeting, but Izzo echoed press reports in naming Baidoa as the chosen town. He noted the GOI had taken our point that everything should not focus on Jowhar, and had suggested to the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) that the parliament should meet in rotating locations. Although Gedi continues to be someone Italy feels it can work with, Izzo said the GOI should also support the parliament more in order to avoid the appearance of playing favorites.

3. (C) Poloff stressed the importance of supporting the TFG as a whole in order to keep the process moving forward. Izzo noted that Yusuf and Hassan should not lord the Aden agreement over their opponents and would need to adopt a conciliatory tone with TFG elements who were not present in Yemen. Recalling the GOI's close contacts with Gedi, Poloff urged Italy to encourage the PM to support convening a session of parliament as agreed. Gedi has remained involved, according to Izzo, and is fully supportive of the Aden Declaration.

3. (C) During Mantica's visit, Italy became the second EU country to accredit a diplomat to the TFG. Amb. Francesco Lanata, who has been the Special Envoy for Somalia working out of Nairobi, was named as the Italian envoy. However, Izzo reported that Mario Raffaelli, who has represented the Italian Government in Nairobi, will maintain his position and will be responsible for coordinating GOI aid with policy. Italy was working to place Somalia on the January 11 EU COAF agenda, Izzo said, and would be urging the EU to present a united voice on representation to the TFG. The MFA's statement following Mantica's trip prominently featured the GOI's cooperation with the U.S. and EU partners, as well as the UN, AU, and Arab League, on Somalia. According to Izzo, the GOI feels it is time for the international community to notice Somalia, and to get involved by supporting the Aden Declaration.

4. (C) Comment. Mantica's visit to Jowhar underscores the GOI's commitment to continued involvement in Somalia, and to support for PM Gedi. However, the MFA also recognizes the need to work with all TFG institutions, especially in light of the Aden agreement. End comment.
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